

2d Cop.

EQUAL RIGHTS.

THE LETTERS

OF THE

REV. WILLIAM CAVEN, D.D.

Recent Modifications of the Separate School Law are in substance what our platform demands.—DR. CAVEN.

All attempts to make party capital out of the Separate School question are either ignorant or dishonest.—DR. CAVEN.

**REV. DR. CAVEN'S PUBLIC LETTER OF APRIL
29th, 1890.**

In view of the near approach of the elections for the Legislature of Ontario I desire to say a word respecting the relation of the Equal Rights Association to party.

The Association is not itself a party in the ordinary sense. It has nothing to say regarding the questions which divide Conservatives and Reformers as such. Both these parties are represented—in what relative proportions I cannot venture to say—in the membership of the Association, and the very existence of the Association depends upon the scrupulous impartiality with which all matters that affect or involve party shall be treated.

Equal Rights men bind themselves to maintain the principles of their alliance as set forth in the platform of the Association; otherwise they are as free as ever to give their support where they choose. The Association represents an important principle—the distinction between Church and State; and it would prevent all undue ecclesiastical interference in civil affairs. It is organised to defend and to propagate this principle.

The Provincial Association cannot forbid those who in any constituency favor its views from bringing forward candidates who are pledged to support those views. Localities must have the right to do so should they deem such action prudent. But none who value the principles of Equal Rights will lend themselves to any sinister method, or permit the Association to become an instrument in the hands of designing men for the advancement of party. Should anything of this kind be attempted in any place every true member of the Association will regard it as base and immoral, and as fitted to do irreparable damage to a most necessary movement. To all men of any party, who have shown no interest in our organization till they imagined that it might be used for per-

sonal or party ends, conscientious and intelligent friends of Equal Rights will give a wide berth.

The great question of Provincial politics to which our principles apply is that of Separate Schools. It does not appear to me that the past relation of the parties to this question permits any line to be drawn by one Association in favor of or against one party rather than the other. Whatever accretions have gathered around the Separate School Act have had, I think, the concurrence of all. Neither party can charge the other with developing Separate Schools; while the recent modifications of the Separate School law are in substance what our platform demands.

Should the views recently advanced in the address by the Provincial Council of the Equal Rights Association, respecting the abolition of Separate Schools, receive due endorsement and find a good measure of support in the community (as I trust they will), an issue of very great importance, both in Provincial and Dominion politics, will have to be decided. Meanwhile, the Association will endeavor to bear its part in forming public opinion; but should constituencies wish to ascertain the opinion of candidates upon a question of deep significance—a question which, in the judgment of most who are watching the educational movement both in Europe and America, must come to the front—they cannot be blamed for doing so.

Let all friends of Equal Rights who are more anxious to have our principles prevail than to secure a party triumph act in concert, with wise forbearance and with fidelity and honor. A time has come to test us whether we are worthy to be entrusted with the defence of a great cause; a cause which has no party significance, and which, let me say, can hurt no party which will not make war upon it.

The writer is entirely responsible for this letter, which is not in any degree official; at the same time he is confident that he expresses the opinion of the excellent men of all parties with whom it has been his privilege to act in the Equal Rights Association.

TORONTO, April 29.

WM. CAVEN.

REV. DR. CAVEN'S PUBLIC LETTER OF MAY
10TH, 1890.

To the Editor of The Mail :

SIR,—It is perhaps too much to expect that in the heat of an election contest keen partisans should refrain from seeking to use for their own ends the utterances of a body which wishes to stand absolutely free from party.

The document recently issued by the Equal Rights Association is not intended to be, as in my judgment it is not capable of being fairly, used against one party rather than another. I must repeat what I said in a letter which you were good enough to publish on the 30th of April, that all attempts to make party capital out of the Separate School question are either ignorant or dishonest, and will be discountenanced by every fair-minded man who knows a little of Canadian history. It were a shameless thing for either party to make the other responsible for extending the privileges of Separate Schools, and almost equally shameless for the community or any considerable section of it to lay the responsibility exclusively upon our legislators. What has been done, whether for good or evil, was done with but little criticism or remonstrance.

Questions relating to Separate Schools have now been raised, and for my own part I am so anxious to have these considered on their merits, that I must regard as an enemy to our cause the man who would prejudice the discussion by making it subserve party interests. Conscientiously representing the principles which they believe to be important, Equal Rights men will, I am sure, be faithful to them and look straight forward, seeking rather to gain the adhesion to our cause of all who love equity and freedom than to take ground which would necessarily ensure, for a time at least, the antagonism of one or other of the political parties. I am glad when men of either party enunciate opinions which I deem to be

sound on the principles of our platform, and so far as our Legislature or Administration takes action in accordance with these principles I would heartily recognize it. I desire, therefore, to say (I speak for myself) that the measures adopted in regard to French Schools appear to be satisfactory, as does the legislation of last session respecting Separate School supporters. Whether the entire provisions of the statute on this latter subject are in the best shape is a point on which I am hardly qualified to offer an opinion.

With the exception of what is said regarding the abolition of Separate Schools, there is nothing in the recent address which is not contained, explicitly or implicitly, in the resolutions adopted by the Convention in June last. This larger question, I humbly think, should be earnestly considered by our people, and is not prematurely brought forward; but till public opinion declares itself with sufficient authority it were unreasonable to expect that any Government should stake its existence on definite action in relation to it. But, unless we have failed to observe what is taking place both in the United States and in Canada, we must be aware that the question of Separate Schools is not yet settled. It is easy—but it is futile—to say that Separate Schools are guaranteed by our constitution; or that two sets of Public Schools are as satisfactory as one; or that England, in which denominational schools exist side by side with Board schools, may be taken as our pattern in a composite system; or that our Roman Catholic fellow-citizens will establish voluntary schools if we abolish Separate Schools, thus defeating the end which we are supposed to have in view in seeking to unify primary education. The answer to all these allegations is that a country such as ours must have liberty to deal with all questions which immediately affect the development of national life, and that, irrespective of the traditions and practice of the old lands—much as we owe to them and much as we love them—we must in our new country keep Church and States separate, refusing to bestow from the public exchequer endowments, or subventions, or gifts upon Churches or upon strictly denominational objects. Here is a clear principle, easily understood

by all, the observance of which would save immense trouble to the State, while it would really benefit the Church and religion. Let those who believe in a State Church hold their opinion, but let them recognize the necessity of observing—in a province such as Ontario at least—the course here indicated.

As long as Separate Schools exist by authority of the State they should be under regulations identical with those which govern the Public Schools, except in so far as the special character which belongs to them or the provisions of the British North America Act determine otherwise. I can hardly see how this statement can be controverted, and it covers, if I mistake not, what is said on this subject in the Address, while it supplies a comparatively easy rule for the Legislature to follow.

The Equal Rights Association will be regarded, I trust, as acting fairly towards the parties in setting forth its views in good time for all to consider them; and who can object to the closing words: "Candidates in the field should be approached by our friends in the constituencies, and he who—other things being equal—is found to be most in accordance with our principles should receive their hearty and undivided support."

Yours, etc.,

WM. CAVEN.

TORONTO, May 10.

